

## Subcontracting Strategy

Academic Year(s): 2025–26

### 1. Introduction

Bishop Auckland College is an established further education college committed to delivering high-quality education and skills provision that meets the needs of learners, employers and the local economy.

This Subcontracting Strategy sets out the College's strategic rationale, governance arrangements, controls and assurance mechanisms for any subcontracted delivery funded through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). The College recognises that it remains fully accountable for the quality, integrity and compliance of all subcontracted provision.

### 2. Policy and Regulatory Context

This strategy is informed by and complies with:

- The Subcontracting Funding Rules for Post-16 Education and Training
- The Adult Skills Fund funding and performance management rules
- The College's Funding Agreement / Contract for Services with the Department for Education (DfE)
- Any additional requirements issued by devolved authorities where applicable

The College ensures that subcontracting activity is compliant with all current DfE funding rules applicable to the relevant funding year.

### 3. Strategic Rationale for Subcontracting

The College subcontracts Adult Skills Fund provision only where this delivers clear strategic benefit, including:

- Meeting identified local or regional skills needs that the College cannot meet directly at scale or pace
- Accessing specialist or niche provision requiring expertise or facilities not held in-house
- Supporting widening participation and engagement with disadvantaged or under-represented learners
- Improving geographical access to provision for learners
- Piloting new provision where partnership delivery offers lower risk

Subcontracting is not used as a substitute for the College's core delivery capability, nor solely to increase learner numbers or income.

### 4. Scope of Subcontracting Activity

- Subcontracting applies only to Adult Skills Fund provision

- The College operates within the subcontracting cap set by the DfE unless explicit written permission has been granted to exceed it
- All subcontracted activity is reported transparently through the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and relevant returns

The College does not permit second-level subcontracting without written approval where required.

## **5. Governance and Accountability**

### **5.1 Governing Body Oversight**

The Governing Body:

- Approves this strategy annually
- Reviews the scale, performance and risk profile of subcontracted provision
- Receives regular reports on quality, learner outcomes, compliance and financial exposure

### **5.2 Senior Management Accountability**

The College's senior leadership team is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with funding rules
- Monitoring subcontractor performance
- Managing contractual and financial risk

## **6. Due Diligence and Selection of Subcontractors**

Before entering into any subcontracting arrangement, the College undertakes robust due diligence including, but not limited to:

- Legal status and organisational structure
- Financial health and sustainability
- Quality track record and delivery capacity
- Ofsted history (where applicable)
- Staff competence and safeguarding arrangements
- Systems for learner eligibility, evidence retention and ILR returns
- Data protection and information security compliance

Due diligence is reviewed annually for all existing subcontractors and refreshed where risks are identified.

## **7. Contractual Arrangements**

All subcontractors operate under a formal written contract that includes:

- Clear scope of delivery and performance expectations
- Compliance with all funding rules and audit requirements
- Quality assurance and monitoring arrangements

- Access to learner records and delivery sites
- Data protection and GDPR obligations
- Termination, clawback and remediation clauses

The College retains the right to intervene or terminate arrangements where performance or compliance falls below acceptable standards.

## **8. Quality Assurance and Performance Management**

The College applies the same quality standards to subcontracted provision as to directly delivered provision.

This includes:

- Regular performance monitoring and management meetings
- Observations of teaching, learning and assessment
- Review of learner outcomes, retention and progression
- Moderation of assessment and internal quality assurance activity
- Learner feedback and complaints monitoring

Concerns are addressed promptly through formal improvement plans where required.

## **9. Funding Assurance and Compliance**

The College takes full responsibility for ensuring that subcontracted delivery:

- Meets learner eligibility requirements
- Is supported by clear, complete and auditable evidence
- Is accurately recorded in the ILR
- Is compliant with funding rules at all times

## **10. Fees, Charges and Value for Money**

The College retains funding from subcontracted provision only to cover the actual cost of services provided, which may include:

- Quality assurance and improvement support
- Data validation and funding compliance checks
- Contract management and performance monitoring
- Staff development and safeguarding oversight
- Audit and assurance activity

Fees are:

- Transparent
- Proportionate
- Reviewed annually
- Clearly documented in the College's Subcontracting Fees and Charges Policy

The College ensures subcontracted arrangements deliver **clear value for money** for learners and the public purse.

### **11. Monitoring, Review and Transparency**

- The College publishes this strategy on its website
- The strategy is reviewed at least annually or sooner if funding rules change
- Subcontracting activity is reported openly to stakeholders, including the Governing Body and the DfE

### **12. Statement of Accountability**

The College recognises that it is fully accountable to the Department for Education for all aspects of subcontracted delivery, including quality, funding compliance and learner outcomes. Subcontracting is managed as a strategic partnership, underpinned by strong governance, assurance and continuous improvement.